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Fireworks Caution Urged As New Year's Eve Approaches; Abide State and Local Use Laws

New Year's Eve is the second most common holiday for fireworks, and a state safety official is urging caution in the proper use of fireworks and to abide by state and local laws concerning their use.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), in 2005 10,800 people were injured by fireworks in the United States and had to be treated in a hospital emergency room. In 2004, 1,500 structure fires and 600 vehicle fires were caused by fireworks and estimated to have caused more than \$21 million in damage. To compare, Indiana had an almost 40% reduction in fireworks injuries during the Independence Day holiday as reported to the Indiana State Department of Health.

"Fireworks are more commonly associated with Independence Day," said Michael S. Garvey, Division Chief of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) Fire and Building Safety. "The New Year is commonly celebrated with fireworks as well. When handled by professionals, a fireworks show may look easy, but each year they cause injury, death and property damage because of misuse and accidents.

"While we would like people to leave fireworks to the professionals, we want to stress the *personal responsibility* of every fireworks consumer, obey our laws, follow directions for safe use and apply common sense," said Michael S. Garvey, Division Chief of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) Fire and Building Safety Division.

Fireworks Law

Garvey also is reminding consumers that an Indiana State Law from March of 2006 states that fireworks must comply with the construction, chemical composition, and labeling regulations of the U.S. Consumer Products Commission.

Fireworks can be purchased only by persons 18 years of age or older from a merchant inspected for fire safety and displaying a permit for sale. The fireworks may be used only on the user's property or on the property of someone who has consented to the use of fireworks on their property.

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On Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day and New Year's Eve, fireworks may be discharged from 9 a.m. to midnight. Any other day of the year, fireworks may be discharged from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. Local laws may further affect fireworks use.

Safety Tips

If you choose to use fireworks, Garvey offers the following safety tips:

Preparation

- Obey local laws, including ban of fireworks due to drought.
- Buy fireworks from a reliable, licensed dealer.
- Read and follow all directions.
- Do not alter any fireworks or attempt to make fireworks.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from the reach of children.
- Safety glasses are recommended for the person lighting or nearby the fireworks, such as a helper.

Location and Conditions

- Keep a fire extinguisher, water supply, hose or bucket of water nearby.
- Use fireworks outdoors, never indoors.
- Use in a clear, open area.
- Keep spectators a safe distance from the show.
- Be cautious of lighting any fireworks during strong wind conditions and light fireworks with prevailing wind blowing away from the spectators.

Fireworks Use

- Don't allow children to handle, play with, or light any fireworks.
- Designate one person to ignite fireworks.
- Light only one firework item at a time.
- Never attempt to re-light, alter or fix any fireworks.
- Never smoke when handling fireworks.
- Drinking alcohol and using fireworks do not mix.
- Never aim, point or throw fireworks at another person.

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Contact

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